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ABSTRACT

A study explored the motivational patterns of public relations (P.R.) professionals and the qualities sought in new employees by these professionals. A representative sample of public relations professionals was surveyed with a questionnaire that included Likert scales of motivational statements and skills sought. Common factor analysis with varimax rotation was used. Results from 669 respondents showed they tend to segment motivational statements into two distinct factors--similar to P. A. Sorokin's sensate and ideational points of view. Results also produced two factors of the qualities the respondents seek in new employees--again, similar to Sorokin's two views. P. R. college majors may find these descriptions helpful in recognizing which profile describes themselves best, and with which professional profiles they would work most productively. In interviews, public relations graduates need to listen for clues as to which profile best matches each prospective employer. (Nine tables of data are included.) Contains 16 references. (Author/RS)

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Two Profiles of P.R. Practitioners and the Two Types of Employees They Want

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RUNNING HEAD: PR Profiles

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to explore two questions: 1) what are the motivational patterns of public relations professionals, and 2) what are the qualities sought in new employees by these public relations professionals. To explore these questions, a representative sample of public relations professionals was surveyed with a questionnaire that included Likert scales of motivational statements and skills sought. Common factor analysis with varimax rotation was used. The results from 669 respondents show they tend to segment motivational statements into two distinct factors—similar to Sorokin's sensate and ideational points of view. The results also produced two factors of the qualities the respondents seek in new employees—again, similar to Sorokin's two views.

It is claimed that public relations is a growing area of study and employment. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985) found public relations second only to daily newspapers as a field of employment in mass communication. In 1988, college enrollment of P.R. majors was 11,081 (Becker, 1990); two years later it had risen 12 percent to 12,476 (Becker, 1991). Graduating P.R. majors, though, may find the competition for public relations jobs tougher than these figures may suggest. The U. S. Department of Labor (1989) shows that there were 133,000 people working as P.R. specialists in 1988, down 22,000 people (or 16 percent) from five years earlier. The weekly median salary for these P.R. specialists in 1988 was $501—a 12 percent increase during that same five-year period when the Consumer Price Index rose 18 percent.

What is known of the different aspects of this competitive field that a growing number of students are entering? Specifically, what motivates P.R. professionals, and what are the qualities they seek in new employees? The concept of the P.R. profession often seems amorphous—shapeless.

There is indeed a substantial body of general research of public relations and its related professions. Austin and Ventura (1985) found personnel managers in western New York to strongly endorse the value of communication skills. In the related field of advertising, Pinzon (1989) found similar results. Cummings (1986) included public relations among key factors contributing to the success of an evaluation unit in one large accounting firm. Curtis, Winsor and Stephens (1989) present skills needed for success in business, such as organizational and interpersonal communication. DiSalvo, Larsen and Seiler (1976) ranked communication skills most important to job success for recent graduates. Warren (1983) surveyed the communication skills important for success at larger companies.

This substantial body of research tends to address public relations as a whole. Only Thompson (1989) investigates different aspects of the profession by comparing the dichotomy between journalism and business schools in the training of P.R. professionals. Thomas presents evidence that supports the benefits of journalistic training. No scholarly work was found that investigates whether P.R. professionals might be segmented in terms of motivations. Therefore, the goal of this study is to exam profiles of P.R. professionals in terms of their unique motivations. Similarly, this study also examines profiles of skills and qualities needed in new employees. The general research questions for this study, then, are what patterns of professional

motivations do P.R. professions have, and what are the patterns of skills and qualities they seek in new employees?

Methodology

Sampling random P.R. practitioners is virtually impossible—there is no definitive list of P.R. professionals; therefore, a representative rather than random sample was selected. Three sources for sampling were selected: 1) members of the Public Relations Society of America were systematically selected, using a systematic sampling of every *n*th member listed in its current membership directory; 2) public relations and public affairs offices were systematically selected from a current issue of *Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives;* and 3) a representative sampling of P.R. managers not found in the first two sources was selected from a variety of independent, non-profit organizations and private corporations, including hospitals, schools, chambers of commerce, accounting firms, and television and radio stations. A check was made for repeat selections and none was found. Table 1 summarizes the numbers of P.R. practitioners selected from each of these three groups, and the usable responses from each.

Insert Table 1 about here

In total, there were 1,350 P.R. professionals selected to receive questionnaires, from whom 669 usable responses were received—a 50 percent response, which Babbie(1992, p. 267) deems adequate. The general linear model was used to test for differences among the three mailing lists, and no meaningful differences were found. Therefore, the responses were analyzed as a whole rather than segmented by the three mailing lists.

Questionnaire

In October 1990, questionnaires were mailed that included 18 Likert scales of qualities and skills sought in new employees and 16 of motivational statements. The survey instrument comprises 16 Likert-type statements regarding the respondents' motivations, and 18 Likert-type statements about the qualities and skills looked for in prospective employees. These statements came from a survey of 30 P.R. professionals and P.R.S.S.A. members in the greater Kansas City area who were asked open-ended questions about what they felt motivated other P.R.

professionals and what skills and qualities they felt were needed in new employees. The results were condensed to the 34 statements used in the survey instrument. Other questions were included to gain information such as gender of respondents, size of the companies for which they worked, and their locations.

Procedure

The questionnaires were mailed along with addressed return envelopes. The data from the completed and returned questionnaires were entered by hand onto NCS forms and then computer read to create a SAS data file. To guard against processing error, data were scanned to locate unreasonable values, and all data were then rechecked for irregularities. There are a small number of missing cases in the original responses, with 14 (or 2 percent) being the most missing cases from any one "motivational statements" variable, and 53 (or 8 percent) being the most missing cases from any one "skills and qualities sought" variable. All missing cases were eliminated by SAS. The motivational statements and the skills sought are the two sets of variables used, with the P.R. practitioners being the units of analysis.

Factor model

Since underlying, latent variables were sought, common factor analysis was used, which is meant to eliminate unique variance.

Data

The two original matrices of correlation (one for motivations and the other for qualities sought) were inspected to ensure that variables used to define each factor actually have substantial correlations. Kaiser's measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) of the variables produced a range of scores from .59 to .87, so no variables were deleted from the analysis. Chronbach's alpha test of reliability was also done for all variables, which produced minimal scores of .68 for motivational statements and .70 for skills sought—all above the .60 minimal criterion. Therefore, all the original variables were retained for analysis. Although all the original variables were used in the factor analysis, for parsimony sake variables were not reported that had a loading of less than .20 on the retained factors.

Preliminary computation

The original data set was used without further transformation. Squared multiple correlation (SMC) was used to estimate the prior communality.

Factor computation

Principal axis was the technique used. The criterion used for retaining factors was that the cumulative proportion of variance accounted for by the eigenvalues equal at least .90. The data were examined and an orthogonal varimax transformation was selected. Orthogonal transformation was used for its simplicity, conceptual clarity, and amenability to subsequent analysis. The rotational method used was varimax, a long-accepted analytic orthogonal rotation technique (Rummel, 1970).

Factor matrices and scores

Both factor analyses produced two factors each. They, along with percentage of variance and final communality, and are discussed below.

Results

From a total of 669 responses, there were over 40 responses from each of the ten major regions of the U.S., as defined by the first digit of the respondents' zip codes. The average number of employees working in P.R. was 4.4 employees; the most common response (the mode) was 2 employees. The median starting salary was $18,425.00; the mean was $20,240.86. A bachelor's degree was required by 63% of the respondents. Table 2 shows that journalism and public relations are the most sought majors. This supports Thompson's findings specifically, as well as the other cited findings generally. Besides the educational requirement, at least one year of experience was demanded by 76.7% of the respondents, as shown in Table 3.

Insert Tables 2 through 5 about here

More than a third of the respondents said they always seek new employees through personal networking, as shown in Table 4. There is only a slight interest in recruiting women for P.R. positions: 53% of the respondents said they make no special effort to recruit women, 33% said they make a general effort to recruit women, and 14% said they had a specific plan to recruit women.

Table 5 shows the mean responses and standard deviations to the 16 motivational statements included in the survey instrument. A sense of accomplishment is most important to P.R. professionals, with, "I take pride in meeting my goals" being most "strongly agreed" with statement. Ten of the sixteen statements were "agreed" with, with mean scores of 1.89 to 2.48. Nearly all of these statements dealt with ideal

qualities: leadership, honesty, corporate ideals, creative freedom, appreciation, enjoyment, and being a part of a team. Only two of these statements dealt with the more functional aspects of the P.R. profession: effectiveness and pressure. Perhaps this propensity for idealism is due to the fact that ideas and concepts are the P.R. professionals' stock-in-trade. The P.R. professionals are so effective in selling ideals because they truly value them themselves.

Three statements were only "slightly agreed," with mean scores between 2.56 to 3.29. Interestingly, while "taking pride in meeting goals" was the most strongly agreed with statement, apparently this is a situation seldom realized, for the statement "I feel a sense of accomplishment in my work" is only "slightly agreed" with. Again, the ideals of work appear to dominate P.R. professionals, for the statement, "I can separate work from my personal life," is only "slightly agreed" with.

Contrary to the stereotype of the avarice P.R. professional, the mean score for financial reward was rated "unimportant." Similarly, the rates by P.R. professionals suggest that they are generally indifferent to a structured work environment and to working alone. None of the 16 statements had a mean score that represented any level of disagreement.

While the results shown in Table 5 present an overall view of the responses from P.R. professionals, they fail to show whether P.R. professionals who agree with one statement are also likely to agree with certain other statements. This later information is shown in the results of factor analysis in Table 6. These results break out into two main factors, presented in order of factor loading. For clarity in presentation, parentheses were placed around each variable's score for the factor on which it loads most heavily.

Qualities that relate to ideals—such as honesty, appreciation, and pride—load more heavily on the first factor. Temporal qualities—such as financial reward—load more heavily on the second factor.

Of the 18 skills and qualities sought in new employees, five were rated as "very important," with mean scores from 1.14 to 1.49. Both general skills and positive attitudes were highly desired. The most valued were communication skills and next writing skills. These two skills were followed by the three qualities of initiative, enthusiasm, and flexibility. Next, deemed as "important" were creativity, team work, experience, a college degree, and sales skills. Particular abilities and

accomplishments are less valued, with items such as technical skills, portfolios, internships, and grade point averages rated as "desirable but not essential." Membership in professional organizations nearly received a mean score as being "unimportant."

Insert Tables 6 through 8 about here

Again, these mean scores fail to show the patterns of which skills and qualities are sought in combination with others. This information is shown in the two factors in Table 8. Similar to the previous factor analysis, the first factor tends to load more heavily with ideal qualities—such as enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity. In the second factor, the temporal qualities—such as college degree, portfolio, and G.P.A.—load heavier.

Discussion

By the patterns of responses to the motivational statements, it appears that P.R. professionals break out into two distinct psychographic segments. In interpreting this survey's results, these underlying factors, or latent variables, are given subjective titles: ideational and sensate. These terms come from Sorokin (1937-1940) who describes changes in the academy as cyclical—moving between centering on ideals, such as Plato did, to focusing on the empirical data we learn from our senses, such as Comte did.

In both factor analyses the first factors load heavier on the ideal, or ideational perspective. Perhaps this is most appropriate for PR professionals, who deal in ideals. Whereas other professionals may be concerned with creating products or monitoring financial statements, it is the PR practitioner whose job it is to create ideals—images of reliability, integrity, or truthfulness.

The second factors load heavier on the temporal qualities—the sensate view. These value the measurable accomplishments, such as income or grades, which account for much less of the variance than do the first ideational qualities.

Professional Factor 1—The Ideational View

These P.R. professionals represent the positive attitudes some might call "warm fuzzies" (James and Jongeward). This is represented by valuing the ideals of a leading organization, even to the point of enjoying doing more

than what is expected. Such people feel appreciated, and so take pride in their accomplishments. Where the cynic may scoff at the PR professionals' enthusiasm as just so much "hype and puff," perhaps the truth is that they do genuinely believe the ideals they expound. PR professions who loaded heavily on this factor are more likely to believe that colleges are inadequately preparing their graduates, f (1,506) = 10.74, $p < .05$.

Professional Factor 2—The Sensate View

This is more a temporal than an ideal view. This person avoids being personally involved in work—preferring structure and solitude. The chief motivation is the paycheck. The implicit message is that this a profile of drudgery, with a high potential for early burn-out. PR professionals who loaded more heavily on this factor were also more likely to have a specific plan to hire women, f (2,549) = 6.46, $p < .05$. PR professionals who loaded heavily on this factor were significantly more interested in PR, Marketing, and Advertising majors than in Liberal Arts majors, F (7,425) = 4.05, $p < .05$.

These results may be supported by P.R. professionals who recognize here descriptions of themselves and of colleagues. Others may find here reaffirmation of personality patterns they suspected to be prevalent in the public relations profession. For the academician, these results suggest further study of the personality profiles of P.R. professionals, perhaps in terms of accepted personality tests. One example would be to test whether there is a relationship between the five factors shown above and the four pairs of personality types in the Jungian Myers-Briggs Test.

Perhaps the most pragmatic use of these data will be for the college students or recent graduates to use these results to better understand the personalities they will encounter in their job search as well as the skills and qualities those prospective employers will be looking for. Similar to the treatment of the two profiles of P.R. professionals discussed above, this report now suggests below two profiles of employees sought by P.R. professionals:

Employee Factor 1—The Ideational View

In this first factor, P.R. professionals want employees who offer personal qualities more than skills. Attributes such as enthusiasm, initiative, flexibility and creativity are most sought. Perhaps these are the qualities most to be valued since they are nearly impossible to be taught. PR professionals from the Northeast (zip 1xxxx) were more likely than those from the Great Lakes region (zip 4xxxx) to load heavily on this factor, F (9, 562) = 2.01, $p < .05$.

Employee Factor 2—The Sensate View

This is a profile of the skilled worker. It includes experience, degree, and portfolio. As opposed to the first factor, all these are easily quantifiable. These are also more cognitive than emotive. PR professionals who loaded more heavily on this factor were also more likely to have a specific plan to hire women, f (2,549) = 6.46, $p < .05$. The lighter the loading on this factor, the higher the starting salaries, F (1,566) = 49.47, $p < .05$. PR professionals who loaded heavily on this factor were significantly more interested in marketing majors than in journalism and mass communication majors, F (7,425) = 4.05, $p < .05$. PR professionals who loaded heavily on this factor are more likely to believe that colleges are adequately preparing their graduates, f (1,506) = 10.74, $p < .05$. PR professionals who loaded heavily on this factor are more likely to be located in large cities, F (3, 583) = 4.46, $p < .05$. PR professionals from the the Northcentral states (zip 5xxxx) were more likely than those from the Mid-Atlantic region (zip 4xxxx) to load heavily on this factor, F (9, 562) = 2.01, $p < .05$.

P.R. majors may find these descriptions helpful in recognizing which profile describes themselves best, and with which professional profiles they would work most productively. In interviews, P.R. graduates need to listen for clues as to which profile best matches each prospective employer, and what profile of skills and qualities that person is looking for. Similarly, P.R. professionals may also find that these results help clarify the image of the employees they are seeking.

Is there a relationship between the two practitioner profiles and the two factors of qualities they're looking for in new employees? There is a strong correlation between the loading of the first factors in both paris discussed (r = .40): ideational PR

professionals tend to look for ideational qualities in new employees (TABLE 9). But then, there is also a significant correlation between sensate professionals and ideational qualities (r = .18), and no significant correlation with sensate qualities and either type of employee (TABLE 9).

It should be noted that these factors are not mutually exclusive. A single potential employer may well show signs of both profiles. It's probably most useful to think of these factor loadings as being like glorified correlation matrices—showing common relationships among similarly loaded variables. These overall results do suggest that there are such discernible, underlying factors in the motivation of PR practitioners and the qualities they seek in new employers. The clarification of these can become tools of insight for both the PR professionals and those entering the field.

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TABLE 1

	PRSA Members	S.&P.	Indept.	Total
Questionnaires sent	250	600	500	1,350
Usable responses received	100	356	213	669
Response rate	.40	.59	.42	.50

TABLE 2

Most Desirable Major

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Public relations	140	29.5
Journalism	137	28.8
Liberal Arts	67	14.1
Marketing	59	12.4
Mass Communication	44	9.3
Advertising	13	2.7
Speech Communication	13	2.7
Broadcasting	2	0.4

Frequency missing = 194

TABLE 3

Work Experience Required

Amount of experience	Frequency	Percentage
No work experience	128	23.3
One to four years	251	45.7
Five or more years	179	31.0

Frequency missing = 120

TABLE 4

Always seeks here for new employees

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Personal networking	211	37.3
Newspaper ads	92	16.4
Unsolicited applications	46	8.3
Trade journals	43	7.9
College placement office	12	2.2
Employment agencies	12	2.2
College Career fairs	4	0.7

Average frequency missing = 114

TABLE 5

Attitudes toward Motivational Statements

Rank	Statements Evaluated	N	Mean	SD
1	I take pride in meeting my goals.	669	1.35	0.60
2	It's important my organization's known as leader	. 665	1.89	1.11
3	My job involves a lot of pressure.	669	1.93	1.08
4	Honesty is the most important virtue in business	.663	2.00	1.13
5	Organizational ideals are my highest priority.	661	2.09	1.08
6	Creative freedom's needed for peak performance.	669	2.14	1.06
7	I feel appreciated by my boss and peers.	655	2.20	1.10
8	Social interaction with employer is important.	669	2.21	1.24
9	Delegating authority maximizes efficiency.	669	2.26	1.04
10	Better to be a team player than an individualist.	661	2.40	1.33
11	I enjoy doing extra work.	659	2.48	1.12
12	I feel a sense of accomplishment in my work.	663	2.56	1.06
13	I can separate work from my personal life.	665	3.23	1.75
14	I enjoy working alone.	660	3.29	1.62
15	Financial reward is the greatest motivator.	668	3.75	1.58
16	Structured work environment helps productivity. 667	3.86	1.70	

Key to scoring:
1 = Extremely agree
2 = Agree
3 = Slightly agree
4 = Not important
5 = Slightly disagree
6 = Disagree
7 = Extremely disagree

TABLE 6

Orthogonal Rotation of Motivational Statements

Statements	Rotated Factors		Communality
	#1	#2	
Organizational ideals are my highest priority.	(.58)	.15	.36
I feel a sense of accomplishment in my work.	(.56)	.11	.33
I enjoy doing extra work.	(.48)	.08	.23
It's important my organization's known as a leader.	(.47)	.18	.25
I take pride in meeting my goals.	(.46)	.13	.23
Honesty is the most important virtue in business.	(.42)	.29	.26
I feel appreciated by my boss and peers.	(.39)	-.06	.16
Delegating authority maximizes efficiency.	(.35)	.31	.21
Creative freedom is needed for peak performance.	(.33)	.27	.18
Social interaction with employer is important.	(.31)	.03	.10
A structured work environment helps productivity.	.23	(.41)	.22
I can separate work from my personal life	-.01	(.37)	.14
Better to be a team player than an individualist.	.33	(.36)	.24
Financial reward is the greatest motivator.	-.02	(.35)	.12
I enjoy working alone.	.05	(.30)	.09
My job involves a lot of pressure.	.18	(.26)	.10
Eigenvalues	2.67	.55	
Proportion of variance	.84	.18	

TABLE 7

Attitudes toward Skills and Qualities

Rank	Skills/Qualities Evaluated	N	Mean	SD
1	Communication skills	621	1.14	0.38
2	Writing skills	619	1.21	0.50
3	Initiative	621	1.27	0.50
4	Enthusiasm	623	1.30	0.53
5	Flexibility	621	1.49	0.60
6	Personality	621	1.51	0.60
7	Creativity	621	1.55	0.61
8	Team worker	623	1.65	0.75
9	Work experience	620	1.92	0.75
10	College degree	623	1.99	0.93
11	Sales/presentation skills	621	2.21	0.85
12	Technical skills	622	2.61	0.87
13	Research	617	2.62	0.78
14	Desktop publishing skills	621	2.63	0.78
15	Portfolio	619	2.67	0.82
16	Internship	616	2.88	0.88
17	Grade point average	616	2.94	0.79
18	Membership in professional organization	621	3.34	0.72

Key to scoring: 1 = Very important
2 = Important
3 = Desired, not essential
4 = Unimportant

TABLE 8

Orthogonal Rotation of Skills and Qualities Sought

Statements	Rotated Factors		Communality
	#1	#2	
Enthusiasm	(.73)	.00	.53
Communication	(.62)	.00	.39
Initiative	(.60)	.01	.36
Flexibility	(.59)	-.02	.35
Creativity	(.58)	.05	.34
Team worker	(.46)	-.02	.22
Personality	(.44)	-.02	.19
Sales/ promotion skills	(.35)	.09	.13
Writing	(.34)	.23	.17
Portfolio	-.05	(.53)	.29
College degree	.11	(.50)	.26
Work experience	.03	(.50)	.25
Member of professional organization	-.05	(.45)	.20
Technical skill	.05	(.43)	.19
Grade point average	-.08	(.43)	.19
Internship	.17	(.39)	.18
Eigenvalues	2.80	1.57	
Proportion of variance	.58	.32	

TABLE 9

Correlations of Factors

Qualities Sought	PR Professional Profiles	
	Factor #1	Factor #2
Factor #1	.40*	.18*
Factor #2	.04	.00

* $p < .05$